SOWK 770
INTRODUCTION TO QUALITATIVE AND MIXED RESEARCH METHODS

SPRING 2012

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Day/Time: Tuesdays, 1:00 to 3:50pm

I. COURSE DESCRIPTION

The objective of this course is to provide an overview of the use of qualitative and mixed methods in social, clinical and health services research. The course is divided into three components:
   1. Reasons for using qualitative and mixed methods, criteria for their use in scientific research, and strategies for development of research questions and designs;
   2. The pragmatics of collecting and analyzing five types of qualitative data: ethnographic participant observation, extended interviews, life histories and illness narratives, focus groups; and structured interviews; and
   3. Case studies of the use of these methods in social, clinical and health services research.

II. COURSE OBJECTIVES

Upon completion of the course, students will be able:
   1. To identify the rationale for using qualitative methods in social work research.
   2. To identify the types of mixed method designs and the procedures for selecting a particular design to meet study aims and objectives.
   3. To explain the procedures used to integrate quantitative and qualitative methods in a single study.
   4. To describe and apply the standards for assessing the quality of qualitative methods.
   5. To describe and apply principles of sampling and recruitment of study participants
   6. To describe and apply principles of obtaining informed consent and adhering to ethical guidelines for data collection and management.
   7. To engage in participant observation.
   8. To conduct structured and semi-structured interviews with study participants.
9. To obtain illness narratives and life histories from study participants.
10. To conduct focus groups with study participants.
11. To manage qualitative data using computerized text analysis software programs.
12. To analyze qualitative data, using techniques such as grounded theory, hermeneutics, concept mapping, and cultural consensus modeling.
13. To understand and apply guidelines for presentation of qualitative data in manuscripts and presentations.

III. COURSE FORMAT

Three primary learning modalities will be used: 1) didactic presentation by the instructor, 2) case analysis and class discussion, and (3) in-class exercises and small group activities. There will be three hours of lecture and discussion per week for the first three weeks, followed by weeks of instructor lecture (2hr) and student presentations (1 hr), and class discussion of a particular topic.

IV. COURSE EVALUATION AND GRAADING

All students are expected to regularly attend class and be on time. A student with more than two unexcused absences during the course of this class may receive a no credit. A student who is tardy three or more times to class may receive a grade of no credit. If a student receives a no credit grade in this seminar, they will be required to repeat this class.

Class grades will be based on the following:

- 3.85 – 4 A
- 3.60 – 3.84 A-
- 3.25 – 3.59 B+
- 2.90 – 3.24 B
- 2.60 – 2.87 B-
- 2.25 – 2.50 C+
- 1.90 – 2.24 C

Final Grade:
- 93 – 100 A
- 90 – 92 A-
- 87 – 89 B+
- 83 – 86 B
- 80 – 82 B-
- 77 – 79 C+
- 73 – 76 C
- 70 – 72 C-
Your grade will be based on the following:

1. CLASS ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION (10%). Attendance and active participation at all class meetings is critical for a successful seminar course. Each week, students are expected to have read and thoughtfully analyzed all assigned readings prior to class. Students will also be evaluated based on their participation in in-class activities data collection activities. You should come prepared to class with a list of questions, reactions, and discussion points on the assigned reading.

2. STUDENT PRESENTATIONS (20%) During weeks 5-9 and 11-14, students will be required to give a presentation in class on one of the readings, focusing on the methods of the study, including strengths and weaknesses. Each student will be responsible for selecting a week in which to present a summary of an article assigned for that week. The goal of the presentation is to provide students with an in-depth exploration of a particular method through careful reading and peer interaction. Presentations should discuss and critically analyze the assumptions, methods, findings, and implications of research in the chosen case study. During Week 15, students will give a brief (20 minute) powerpoint presentation of their proposed research project.

3. HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENTS (20%) Students will be required to complete two homework assignments. The first will be to conduct a minimum of one hour of participant observation. This can be done during lunch in a public place (e.g., restaurant, campus quad) or a field placement setting. The second assignment will be a data coding. Students will give an in-class summarization of the process and results of each activity.

4. FINAL PAPER (50%). Final papers should be doubled spaced and between 15 and 20 pages in length, not counting tables, figures and supplementary materials. The paper should take the form of a research proposal for using qualitative methods, either alone or in combination with a quantitative design, in investigating a topic of your own choosing. The proposal should include a specific hypothesis or question to be answered, your rationale for conducting the study, and a description of how the study would be conducted.

V. ATTENDANCE POLICY

Students are expected to attend every class and to remain in class for the duration of the session. Failure to attend class or arriving late may impact your ability to achieve course objectives which could affect your course grade. Students are expected to notify the instructor by telephone or email of any anticipated absence or reason for tardiness. University of Southern California policy permits students to be excused from class, without penalty, for the observance of religious holy days. This policy also covers scheduled final examinations which conflict with students' observance of a holy day. Students must make
arrangements in advance to complete class work which will be missed, or to reschedule an examination, due to holy days observance.

VI. COURSE EXPECTATIONS AND GUIDELINES

Students are expected to attend class sessions, complete all reading assignments, participate in class discussions and activities, submit work on the date and time specified by the instructor, and contribute to an atmosphere of mutual respect and civil discourse.

VII. REQUIRED TEXTBOOKS


RECOMMENDED TEXTBOOKS


Wolcott, H. F. (2001). Writing up qualitative research, 2nd ed.

VIII. ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATIONS

Any student requesting academic accommodations based on a disability is required to register with Disability Services and Programs (DSP) each semester. A letter of verification for approved accommodations can be obtained from DSP. Please be sure the letter is delivered to the instructor as early in the semester as possible. DSP is located in STU 301 and is open from 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. The phone number for DSP is (213) 740-0776.

IX. EMERGENCY RESPONSE INFORMATION

To receive information, call main number (213)740-2711, press #2. “For recorded announcements, events, emergency communications or critical incident information.”
To leave a message, call (213) 740-8311
For additional university information, please call (213) 740-9233
Or visit university website; http://emergency.usc.edu
If it becomes necessary to evacuate the building, please go to the following locations carefully and using stairwells only. Never use elevators in an emergency evacuation.

University Park Campus City Center
MRF – Lot B Front of the building (12th & Olive)
SWC–LotB
WPH – McCarthy Quad Orange County Campus
VKC – McCarthy Quad Faculty Parking Lot
Skirball Campus
Front of building
Do not re-enter the building until given the “all clear” by emergency personnel.
X. COURSE OUTLINE AND ASSIGNMENTS

Week 1 (Jan 10): Introduction: What are qualitative methods and why do we use them
Topics:
• The “art” and “science” of qualitative methods
• Rationale for using qualitative designs and methods
• Examples of when qualitative methods are used in social, clinical and health services research

Readings:
Padgett Chaps 1-2 (T)

Week 2 (Jan 17): What are mixed methods and why use them?
Topics:
• Rationale for using mixed designs and methods
• Logistics of mixed method designs
• Examples of when mixed methods are used in social, clinical and health services research

Readings:
Cresswell & Plano Clark, Chaps 1-3 (T)
Padgett, Chap 3 (T)

Recommended:
Week 3 (Jan 24): Qualitative and Mixed Method Research Questions and Study Designs

Topics:
- Linking Methods to Aims
- Types of Research Questions
- Triangulation of data
- Design and Methods Decisions [Homework assignment – develop outline of paper or proposal indicating specific aims, rationale, study participants, and study design]

Readings:
Cresswell & Plano Clark, Chaps 4-5


Padgett, Chap 3


Recommended:


Week 4 (Jan 31): Sampling, Recruiting and Protecting Research Participants

Topics:
- Sampling of informants and other participants
- Recruiting
- Managing relationships with informants
- Ethics

Readings:
Cresswell & Plano Clark, Chap 6


Padgett, Chap 5 & 6

**Recommended:**

**Week 5 (Feb 7): The Structured Interview**

**Topics:**
- Deciding how to conduct interview
- Number of interviews/implications for sample size
- Tips for maximizing interview

**Readings:**
Padgett, Chap 7 (T)

**Recommended:**

**Week 6 (Feb 14): The Focus Group**

**Topics:**
- Types of focus groups
- Recruitment of focus group participants
- Developing the agenda
- Running the focus group

**[Homework assignment – READ TRANSCRIPTS FOR IN CLASS DATA CODING]**

**Readings:**


**Week 7 (Feb 21): Management of Qualitative Data**

**Topics:**
- Organizing data
- Coding data
- Computer assisted qualitative data management and analysis

**[Homework assignment –Data coding]**

**Readings:**


Padgett, Chap 8

Seidman, Chap 8

**Week 8 (Feb 28): Analysis of Qualitative Data I**

**Topics:**
- Quantifying qualitative work
- Content Analysis
- Software options and free hand
- Data coding **[In-class activity]**

**Readings:**


**Week 9 (Mar 6): Analysis of Qualitative Data II**

**Topics:**
- Thick Descriptions
- Case Studies

**Readings:**

Cresswell & Plano Clark, Chap 7 (T)


**March 13 - Spring Break - No class**

**Week 11 (Mar 20): Analysis of Qualitative Data III**

**Topics:**
- Patterns & Themes
- Theory-based analysis approaches

**Readings:**


Week 12 (Mar 27): The Ethnographic Study, Participant Observation, & formal ethnographic methods

Topics:
• Objectivity and subjectivity in participation and observation
• Getting into the field
• Collecting and recording data [Homework Assignment – Participant observation]
• Rapid Assessment Procedures
• Pile Sorts, Freelistings, Triads [In-class activity]

Readings:

Buchbinder, M., & Timmermans, S. (under review). Medical technologies and the dream of the perfect newborn. *Submitted to Journal of Medical Anthropology*


Padgett, Chap 6 (T)


Week 13 (Apr 3): The Extended Interview - Life History and Illness Narrative

Topics:
• Types of extended interviews
• Medical histories and life histories
• Patient stories about being ill
• Eliciting context from experience

• Techniques for informant-based data collection [In-class activity]

Readings:


Padgett Chap 6 (T)

Recommended Readings:


**Week 14 (Apr 10): Analysis of Qualitative Data IV**

**Topics:**
- Mixed Methods
- Multidimensional scaling
- Consensus analysis
- Concept mapping

**Readings:**
- Cresswell & Plano, Chap 7

**Recommended:**

**Week 16 (Apr 17): Evaluating the Quality of Qualitative and Mixed Methods**

**Topics:**
- Positivist and postmodernist criteria
- Aims and Outcomes
- Impact of qualitative and mixed method studies

**Readings:**
- Creswell & Plano Clark, Chap 8
- Kreuger & Casey, Chap 7
- Padgett, Chap 9

**Week 15 (Apr 24): Presentation of Qualitative and Mixed Method Data**

**Topics:**
- Preparation of manuscripts
- Oral Presentations
- Posters
Readings:
Cresswell & Plano Clark, Chap 8
Padgett, Chap 10

Recommended: